

EXPRESS MAIL NO.: EL563154965US

CLAIMS

Sub
A2
1. A system for managing questions submitted by a person with a question (i.e., a question poser) and answered by one or more experts comprising:

2 a question management server;
3 a question poser communication interface;
4 an expert communication interface;
5 an expert ranking database for maintaining a list of experts in one or more
6 categories along with an item of information indicative of one or more factors selected
7 from a group of factors consisting of timeliness of an expert in providing answers and
8 quality of answers provided by an expert;
9 an expert set determinator for extracting a set of experts in a particular category
10 from the expert ranking database; and
11 a sliding window manager for extracting a contiguous subset of the set of
12 experts to whom to send a question received from a question poser.
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1 2. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:
2 a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser; and
3 a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the
4 feedback received from the question poser.

1 3. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:
2 an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a
3 question; and
4 a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the
5 time taken by the expert to answer the question.

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- 1 4. A system according to claim 1, further comprising:
- 2 a user-session manager for receiving feedback from the question poser;
- 3 an expert timer manager for timing the time taken by an expert to answer a
- 4 question; and
- 5 a ranking manager for adjusting the item of information in accordance with the
- 6 time taken by the expert to answer the question and the feedback received from the
- 7 question poser.

1 5. A method on a server for managing questions received via a network from a
2 plurality of client systems comprising steps of:
3 receiving a question from a question poser using a client system;
4 extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores;
5 selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores;
6 and
7 providing the question to the subset of experts.

1 6. A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:
2 receiving an answers from an expert; and
3 sending the answer to the question poser.

1 7. A method according to claim 5, further comprising steps of:
2 receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an
3 answer provided by the expert; and
4 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback
5 response.

1 8. A method according to claim 6, further comprising steps of:
2 timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and
3 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time
4 taken.

1 9. A method according to claim 6, comprising a step of:
2 timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;
3 reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in the subject
4 category; and
5 adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer
6 the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

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1 10. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:
2 reading a time limit;
3 starting a timer;
4 waiting until the timer reaches the time limit; and
5 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer
6 having reached the time limit.

1 11. The method according to claim 10 wherein the step of reading a time limit
2 comprises a substep of:
3 receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

1 12. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:
2 receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and
3 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the
4 explicit declination.

1 13. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:
2 receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;
3 performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit
4 declination to a preselected declination limit time; and
5 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an
6 outcome of the comparison.

1 14. A method according to claim 5, comprising steps of:
2 sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and
3 receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

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- 1 15. A method according to claim 14, further comprising steps of:
- 2 storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit
- 3 was too short;
- 4 waiting until a time period has elapsed;
- 5 obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;
- 6 performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and
- 7 adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the
- 8 comparison.

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1 16. A method for operating an expert answer web site comprising steps of:
2 receiving a question from a question poser;
3 selecting a set of experts on the basis of one or more factors selected from a
4 group of factors consisting of the timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the
5 quality of the answers provided by each expert; and
6 notifying the set of experts of the question.

1 17. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of
2 experts comprises a substep of:
3 e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

1 18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of
2 experts comprises a substep of:
3 sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

1 19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the step of notifying the set of
2 experts comprises a substep of:
3 sending a generating a web page including the question.

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1 20. A computer readable medium containing programming instructions for managing
2 a question answer system comprising programming instructions for:
3 receiving a question from a question poser;
4 extracting a set of experts with associated ranking scores;
5 selecting a subset of the set of experts based on the associated ranking scores;
6 providing the question to the subset of experts;

1 21. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising
2 programming instructions for:
3 receiving an answers from an expert; and
4 sending the answer to the question poser.

1 22. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, further comprising
2 programming instruction for:
3 receiving a feedback response from the question poser on the quality of an
4 answer provided by the expert; and
5 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the feedback
6 response.

1 23. A computer readable medium according to claim 21, further comprising
2 programming instructions for:
3 timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question; and
4 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the time
5 taken.

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1 24. A computer readable medium according to claim 21, comprising programming
2 instructions for:

3 timing the time taken by the expert to answer the question;

4 reading a typical time for other experts to answer questions in the subject
5 category; and

6 adjusting a ranking score on the basis of the time taken by the expert to answer
7 the question, and the time for other experts to answer questions in the subject category.

1 25. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming
2 instructions for:

3 reading a time limit;

4 starting a timer;

5 waiting until the timer reaches the time limit;

6 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert on the basis of the timer
7 having reached the time limit.

1 26. The computer readable medium according to claim 25, wherein the programming
2 instructions for reading a time limit comprises programming instructions for:

3 receiving a time constraint from the question poser.

1 27. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming
2 instructions for:

3 receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert; and

4 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in response to receiving the
5 explicit declination.

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1 28. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming
2 instructions for:

3 receiving an explicit declination to answer the question from an expert;
4 performing a comparison of a time used by the expert to submit the explicit
5 declination to a preselected declination limit time; and
6 adjusting a ranking score associated with the expert in accordance with an
7 outcome of the comparison.

1 29. A computer readable medium according to claim 20, comprising programming
2 instructions for:

3 sending an indication of a time limit for answering the question to an expert; and
4 receiving a message from the expert indicating that the time limit is too short.

1 30. A computer readable medium according to claim 29, further comprising
2 programming instructions for:

3 storing the name of the expert in a list of experts that indicated that the time limit
4 was too short;
5 waiting until a time period has elapsed;
6 obtaining a count of a number experts in the list;
7 performing a comparison of the count to a preselected threshold; and
8 adjusting a ranking score of the expert in accordance with an outcome of the
9 comparison.

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1 31. A computer readable medium for operating an expert answer web site comprising
2 programming instructions for:

3 receiving a question from a question poser;

4 selecting a set of experts on the basis of one or more factors selected from a group
5 consisting of the timeliness of each expert in providing answers and the quality of the
6 answers provided by each expert; and

7 notifying the set of experts of the question.

1 32. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming
2 instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

3 e-mailing the question to the set of experts.

1 33. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming
2 instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises programming instructions for:

3 sending a wireless device messages to the set of experts.

1 34. The computer readable medium according to claim 31, wherein the programming
2 instructions for notifying the set of experts comprises a programming instructions for:

3 sending a generating a web page including the question.
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